

Distinguished Vice-President of ECOSOC your Excellency Mr. Mahmaminov,
Ambassadors, delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honor and pleasure this afternoon of presenting to you, on behalf of UN-Water, the United Nations family's joint position on global progress toward SDG 6 that is based on the first integrated review we have done – the SDG 6 Synthesis Report. This work is the result of enormous efforts made by you, the Member States as well as the UN system, international organizations, professional associations and other civil-society groups that are actively involved in water.

The main message of the UN-Water Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation is clear. While many positive advancements have been made, there is much work to be done. If the current pace of implementation is not increased, we will not achieve our water and sanitation targets by 2030. The world is not on track.

Some of the staggering fact regarding Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene were just presented. This causes that about 25% of the children are stunted and still 1000 children dying every day because of diarrhea and preventable diseases due to poor hygiene. A fact that does not make it the front-line news, but a situation that we cannot accept.

Turning to the environment, the extent of the worlds wetland areas has decreased by some 70 %in the last century resulting in the loss of water retention, flood control and water filtration services as well as significant loss of freshwater biodiversity. Freshwater pollution is prevalent and increasing in many parts of the

world. Poor water quality also decreases water availability, an additional stress particularly for water-scarce regions. Without functioning freshwater ecosystems, our progress in society and development comes to a halt.

More than 2 billion people live in countries experiencing high water stress. The greatest of all water consumers, agriculture, accounts for nearly 70% of withdrawals globally, but this can go up to 90% in some arid countries. As population continues to grow and consumption patterns often change unsustainably to more water intensive production (SDG 12), food production will require increasing amounts of water. Saving just a fraction of this can significantly alleviate water stress in other sectors; therefore, we consider increasing water efficiency and productivity in agriculture an important part of the solution for the global water crisis. This is also true for the energy sector (SDG 7) and its increasing water demand, and vice versa, the energy consumption of the water sector continues to rise as well.

This situation is likely to get worse due to climate change, which locally can alter precipitation patterns to cause too much water, in the form of floods, or too little water in the form of water scarcity and drought. Increasingly, we also understand that climate change also impacts water quality.

And while the Synthesis Report also recognizes that since water cuts across all sectors in a country, advancing an integrated water resources management approach is imperative for achieving sustainable water management - arguably the most comprehensive step to take and some 80% of countries have laid solid foundations for the implementation of IWRM, but progress needs to be

accelerated. Further integration and coordination across water-using sectors is crucial to ensure that limited water resources are shared effectively among many competing demands and benefit all.

Most UN Member States (over 150 countries) share water bodies, making transboundary water cooperation a key prerequisite for peace and stability. Yet wider coverage is needed in many regions of the world, as the national percentage of transboundary basins covered by an operational arrangement is only 59% of reporting countries. The barriers to cooperation are many, from a lack of political will to a shortage of financial, human and technical capacity, and poor data availability.

In addition, while 75% of reporting countries indicated that they have clearly defined policies and procedures in place for service users and communities to participate in planning programmes for drinking water supply and sanitation, the quality of that engagement - involving all members of society in a meaningful way - is considered low. So having good policies on paper, is one thing, implementation of those, is another.

Despite all this, progress has been made and solutions exist.

First, multi-stakeholder partnerships offer a way to optimize resources, both financial and human, and knowledge, and we need more of them. They also promote inclusiveness and platforms for participation, improve governance and decision-making for integrated and inclusive planning.

Second, we need to capitalize on innovative efforts to increase information and data. A lot more effort is needed to strengthen monitoring of SDG 6 as well as making existing data available and comparable with the SDG 6 monitoring requirements. The lack of financial, institutional and human resources adversely impact data collection and harmonization. Accelerating the utilization of new technologies like the latest Earth observations, citizen science and private sector data offers huge potential to improve the situation.

Third, good water governance underpins the efforts of eliminating inequalities (SDG 10). Equal access to sufficient safe and affordable water, and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene, can mean the difference between prosperity and poverty, well-being and ill-health, and even living and dying. Elimination of inequalities will make large strides for the achievement of both SDG 6 and the ambitions of the Agenda 2030 to ensure no one is left behind.

Fourth, money spent on water and sanitation is a good investment and we need we more. The funds to achieve just the drinking water supply, sanitation and hygiene targets alone, which are much less than those related to water resources management, is not available in 80% of participating countries. The usual manner of doing business is not enough and we clearly need a new financing paradigm. The efficiency of existing financial resources and mobilizing additional and innovative forms of different sources of domestic and international finance, such as blended financing, must be increased. This requires an enabling environment to do so.

And, five, we must strengthen human and institutional capacity and this needs a long-term commitment. Even if financial resources are available, we need the people to own and implement this ambitious agenda. Only limited progress can be made and any investment is at risk without having human and institutional capacity in place.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are obstacles, but there are also solutions, but we need a concerted effort, by everyone, inside this room and outside, to achieve the water and sanitation goal. The urgency of the water crisis cannot be understated, nor the opportunities that we currently miss with respect to socio-economic development. To achieve this and the other goals in 2030 Agenda, we have to shift gear, set priorities and address water and sanitation effectively in an integrated way.

The time to act is now.

Thank you very much.